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just the **FACTs**

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in south Florida.

Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program

Underscoring the state's commitment to Greater Everglades Ecosystem restoration, the Florida Legislature in 2007 expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to include protection and restoration of the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. At the same time, the Legislature also expands the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund for Northern Everglades restoration and extends it through 2020.

As part of an interagency effort to improve the health of the Northern Everglades, the State of Florida will set aside land, construct treatment wetlands and identify the water storage areas needed to improve the quality, timing and distribution of water in the natural system.

The Northern Everglades Legislation:

- Recognizes that Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Watersheds are critical water resources of the state.
- Expands the use of the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund for Northern Everglades restoration.
- Extends the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund through 2020.

In conjunction with stakeholder input, the Northern Everglades protection program was developed with scientific and engineering recommendations through:

Phase II of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan includes:

- Implementing agricultural management practices on more than 1.7 million acres of farmland;
- Adopting new regulations that will reduce the impacts of development on water quality and flow;
- Building treatment wetlands to clean water flowing into the lake;
- Using other innovative "green" nutrient control technologies to reduce phosphorus loads from the watershed; and
- Creating between 900,000 and 1.3 million acre-feet of water storage north of the lake through a combination of above-ground reservoirs, underground storage and alternative water storage projects on public and private lands.

Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers Watershed Protection Plans identifies:

- Watershed storage and water quality projects for the estuaries by January 1, 2009.
- Required best management practices and the best available "green technologies" to reduce nutrients and improve water quality.
- Hydrology improvements to the water quality, and habitats of the watersheds.

Engaging stakeholders and ensuring public involvement throughout plan development and providing ongoing access to status reports -- as well as continuous coordination with other resource agencies -- will result in the successful development of a Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.



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